SUFFOLK LIFE NEWSPAPERS Sunday, September 3, 1978

Klar backs up 'serious' candidacy with mone

by Rick Brand

After eight weeks of campaigning and $40,000 of spending, Steve Klar, one of five candidates in the Democratic Congressional primary, last week complained he is still having problems convincing some people he is a serious candidate.

"I got a call last night at eight o'clock asking me to come to a Smithtown Democratic candidates night, which was supposed to start at 8:30. They said they were sorry but that they just forgot to invite me," said the 31 year old lawyer and realtor.

If there is one thing Klar is, it is serious. By the Sept. 12 primary, Klar expects to spend $70,000, mostly his own money, on his campaign, dwarfing even party designee John Randolph who has only raised about $22,000 to date.

"I'd spend $100,000 if I had it," said Klar. "To me, it is an expression of my commitment to this race."

Opponents, however, say Klar is trying to make up with money what he lacks in grassroots support.

Another indication of the Klar earnestness is that brother Dr. Ron Klar, 33, has left his $44,000 a year job as a health policy administrator with the federal Dept. of Health Education and Welfare in Washington to manage Steve's campaign.

"We're not in this race to lose," said Klar. "We are competitive and aggressive." That style can be seen in Klar campaign themes which attack Long Island's depressed economy and high taxes which hit the homeowner. Klar even opened his campaign in front of a foreclosed house.

Similarly, his campaign boasts the most modern techniques available in direct mail and canvassing.

Although the Congressional campaign puts Klar into the high roller category, he said it a calculated gamble. "Had there been a bright political star that seemed unbeatable," said the candidate, "I don't think I would have entered the race."

Back in May, however, Klar spent about $5,000 to have Patrick Caddell, pollster for President Carter and one time presidential hopeful George McGovern, take a pulse of the 1st C.D.

"He told us there was a 70 per cent undecided factor. That means the election is a wide open ballgame."

Among the factors Klar feels weigh in his favor is the name recognition the family real estate firm has developed over the 30 years it has been in business.

Klar, who took over the business from his father while still in law school eight years ago, said the firm has sold more than 40,000 homes to Long Island.

Besides using top-notch pollsters, the Klars have paid an 11 person phone bank, which makes 2,000 to 3,000 calls nightly trying to get out the vote. While Klar said paid workers are "more efficient", he also said the organization has 50 "hardcore" volunteers and another 100 who will help on primary day.

The Klar campaign has also developed a voter lists which can be broken down for special group mailing.

With those voter lists, the Klar campaign has sent out one direct mailing to all 50,000 registered Democratic households, and will have sent out 10 or 11 mailings to specialized groups ranging from 500 to 4,000 voters by the primary. The organization is also mailing individual letters to voters with whom the canvassers have made contact and had specific questions for Klar. "These aren't form letters, but individual drafted letters," said Ron. "We expect to send 1,000 of those letters out as well."

Klar in his Coram campaign headquarters.

Those who know him also say Klar is an energetic and articulate campaigner, who has sought out voters in bingo games to coffee klatches, in addition to party candidate functions.

Going after non-voter

"If there is a big turnout," said Klar, "then I'll have a strong chance, because I'm aiming to get people who don't ordinarily come out to vote in a primary."

Klar said efforts by Randolph and other primary challenger Patrick Russell to get his petitions thrown out are indications of their concern.

Randolph forces admit they are worried about Klar's candidacy, simply because it is "a very big question mark," especially in a primary where only 10,000 to 15,000 votes are expected to be cast.

Said Randolph aide Phil Giaramita, "When you have someone pouring money into a campaign like they (the Klars) are, you wonder what kind of impact it is going to have."

Other Democrats say Klar doesn't any ties to the community and isn't e full-time Suffolk County resident.

Klar, whose legal residence is a dominium in Port Jefferson Station mits he also keeps a residenc Manhattan. He declined to say ho divides his time between his Suffolk city homes.

Although the headquarters of business is in Nassau County, claimed 80 per cent of the properti handles are located in the 1st C.D.

Despite the money Klar is puttin the race, some Democrats feel it wo enough to pull off an election victor

Said one member of the Brookl Democratic Executive comm "Malcolm Smith spent a quarter m dollars, more than anyone else out ever spent trying to beat Otis Pike, a got slaughtered. People aren't that fooled."